

Sept 19, 2016

To: The Woodlands Township (Attn: John McGowan)

From: Bike The Woodlands Coalition

Subject: The Woodlands Township Pedestrian & Bicycle Master Plan Public Input

We are writing to provide our comments and suggestions on the draft plan.

1) Summary and General Comments that encompass the entire draft Master Plan:

- It is critical and our Coalition's top priority that the final list of recommended short term projects incorporate at least one East/West (I-45 <-> SH 2978) and North/South (SH 242/1488 <-> Creekside) bicycle friendly corridors which will serve as the backbone to The Woodlands Bicycle Network.
- All proposed on street bike lane projects should include removal of protruding curbs and repair of shoulders (I.e cracks, pot holes) as part of their project scope/design/cost estimate. A more general plan for removal of the dangerous protruding curb jutouts could also be included in the Master Plan that incorporates removal of the protruding jutouts whenever Harris/Montgomery Cty/WRUD makes any intersection road changes. Even where shoulder surfaces are reasonably useable by cyclists, these curb jutouts force cyclists into car lanes or at least across elevated lips or deep shoulder/road crevices that can result in loss of control, crashes and injury.
- Complete streets design principles should be incorporated in all future roadway design & construction; which means designing roads that provide safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists, as contrasted with "incomplete streets" that are designed with only cars in mind. One possible implementation approach is to incorporate Complete Streets into The Woodlands covenant restrictions and design standards. Any entity desiring to make changes to the roads within The Woodlands would be required to submit the design to the Township for review and approval.
- Once the Master Plan is approved, the Master Plan should be communicated to the various road construction entities within The Woodlands, which would include The Township formally requesting from Harris County Precinct 4, Montgomery County Precincts 2, 3, & 4 and the WRUD that they involve the Township in future road expansion designs for roads falling within The Township's boundaries. The Township should also request that all future road expansion designs:
 - Meet TxDOT shoulder design specifications and include 8-10 foot width.
 - Provide for a 10-12 foot shared use path easement within the right of way where the Township would have an option to construct and maintain a shared path.

- Once the Master Plan is approved, the Master Plan should be communicated with the surrounding communities of Oak Ridge, Shenandoah, Conroe, and the Buffalo Bayou Conservancy in case they wish to develop plans to tie into The Woodlands network.
- On existing pathways within a two block radius of schools, the Master Plan should recommend the use of additional cross road safety devices such as Photo-Sensor Bollards that act as a passive detection device used to trigger in-pavement crosswalk lights or LED pedestrian signs. Typically, a pair of bollards is placed at each end of a crosswalk. When a pedestrian/bicyclist passes between the two bollards, an IR light beam is 'broken', and the crosswalk lighting system is activated. An example of such a system can be found at <http://www.xwalk.com/pages/Photo-Sensor-Bollards.htm>.
- An excellent School crosswalk sign in The Woodlands exists on New Trails. It has LED lights that are intense and grab your attention. Signs like it would be good to place at all school crossings.
- Existing pathway road crossing signals should be aligned with the road traffic signals so as to signal to the pathway user when it is safe to cross the road
- A solution to address pathway crossings when left turn flashing yellow and walk lights are on at the same time needs to be identified. The pedestrian thinks that they are safe to cross based on the "walk" crossing light being on and the left turning vehicle also thinks they are ok to turn left safely. As more traffic lights have the left turn blinking yellow, there needs to be a way to notify the pedestrian crossing to be aware that cars may be turning left even though the safe to walk sign is lit.
- All right lanes that are being widened or added greatly increase risks for pedestrian and cyclists alike. The safety zones for pedestrians and cyclists are being either eliminated completely or reduced greatly, increasing risk for the most vulnerable travel populations. These roadway changes should also include in their design how they will handle the road widening impact for pedestrians and cyclists so as not to increase risk of collision with pedestrians/cyclists.
- Locations where driveways or entryways cross existing pathways are high risk areas for collisions between pedestrians and vehicles. In order to decrease potential injuries, these crossings should have some type of increased visibility so that drivers are given warning that they are about to cross a pathway or that there may be pedestrians or cyclists in the walkway. We believe State law says that a motorist must stop if there is someone "entering" the crossing on a "sidewalk".

2) Comments specific to individual projects:

- The Trolley Route shared use path project should be removed from the short term list because it is already approved and funded by The Woodlands Development Corporation.
- The Kuykendahl North/South shared use path project (12' sidepath) should be moved from medium term to short term in order to provide a North/South bike friendly corridor, which with the already proposed E/W Lake Woodlands central

bike lane, will allow people who ride bikes to safely travel from one end of The Woodlands to the other. These two roads will serve as the spine of The Woodlands Bicycle network.

- The Fast Track Barrier Access Gap project along 242 should be updated to provide a direct north link into Lone Star College. At a minimum, the intersection at LoneStar College should have a project which allows for safe passage across 242 to the southside pathway system.
- An additional project should be added to the Master Plan which addresses increased and safer access to Lonestar college for residents who live on the North side of 242 (e.g. Windsor Hills).
- Though 2978 marks the western border of The Woodlands & is not officially part of The Woodlands boundary, we recommend that the Master Plan include a bike Shared use pathway project along 2978 from May Valley to Research Forest as part of the plan in the med/long term project list.

When considering the specifics of the Master Plan, we think it is important to reflect on the wider perspective of pedestrian and cycling activities in this community, and how the Master Plan will positively impact many residents. The Woodlands is a unique and special master planned community with amenities such as parks, pools, soccer fields, and pathways; all allowing residents to be able to live, work, and play within The Woodlands. Families purchase homes and businesses relocate here because of those amenities; which fosters a healthy and active lifestyle. Bicycling in all forms (family oriented, leisure, exercise, competition training, transportation, etc) is considered to be an important aspect of living in The Woodlands by many of the residents. Every day you can see families and individuals walking on the trails and riding their bicycles throughout the community. These activities foster a greater sense of community, contributes towards safer neighborhoods, and overall better health.

The Master Plan addresses the health, safety, and connectivity improvements that The Woodlands so greatly needs and reflects the community's desires. The plan was developed with input from a broad cross section of the community and included a selection of both large & small projects distributed across all the Villages while providing recommended projects to address the various bicycling & walking constituencies (i.e. fitness cyclists, commuters, families, kids riding to school, social riders, etc).

On behalf of our friends, family, and Bike The Woodlands Coalition, we look forward to using the proposed new bikeways for our daily errands, commutes, and recreation in the years to come. We look forward to having safer streets for our children to ride, for active commuting, and for a casual ride. We are excited to see that The Woodlands recognizes the importance of promoting safe places for people to walk & bicycle and we are proud to be part of a community that is taking a necessary step forward. Our hope is that we can be an example to other communities by demonstrating enthusiasm and support for this important effort.

We are Bike The Woodlands Coalition; a grassroots group promoting all aspects of bicycling in and around The Woodlands. We are seeking to achieve a more bicycle

friendly community where bicycling will be convenient and safe, with a well-planned bicycling infrastructure connecting neighborhoods, business areas, parks, communities, and surrounding counties that accommodates all ages and abilities. Such actions and infrastructure will establish The Woodlands as a more Bicycle Friendly Community; one that promotes safe transportation for anyone wanting to travel by bicycle.

In conclusion, we thank the Board for funding the Master Plan development; the community for actively participating in development of the Plan by identifying needs, projects & priorities; the Township staff and Jones & Carter for facilitating and constructing the Plan. We strongly encourage The Township Board to approve & fund The Woodlands Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan because it is a blueprint for how to make walking and bicycling in The Woodlands safer, easier, and more fun! It sets a vision for The Woodlands to become a Gold Level Bike Friendly Community.

Please feel free to contact George Mendes (George.mendes@sbcglobal.com), who is our organizational point of contact for our Master Plan inputs, if you have questions regarding our comments above.

Kind regards,

